



December 9, 2011

Asking Questions Can Protect You from Charity Scams

By Attorney General Jon Bruning

During the holiday season, Nebraskans give to charities with open hearts and wallets. To those in need, every dollar counts and legitimate charities depend on the generosity of people like you. Unfortunately, the busy holiday season is the perfect time for fraudsters to catch you unaware. Although we all want to lend a hand, we must remember scammers are looking for ways to take advantage of the season and our generosity.

While most requests for donations are legitimate, some are not. It's not uncommon for fraudulent telemarketers, door-to-door solicitors, and Internet spammers to claim they represent charitable organizations. These scam artists may try to solicit a contribution from you or try to sell you a product they claim will benefit a charity or other group.

Taking the time to ask questions can protect you from becoming a victim of a charity scam.

Do not make an immediate decision on giving, especially if you are not familiar with the charity. Ask for and write down the contact information of the organization including the name, address, and phone number. Ask how the donation will be used. What percentage will go for administrative costs? What percentage will actually be used to fund the charity's programs? Finally, ask for information to be mailed to you before making a donation.

Above all, refuse high pressure tactics or appeals meant to tug at your heartstrings. Legitimate charities are professionally managed and will have the documentation to back up their claims. If you don't wish to be called by the group again, ask to be added to their "do-not-call" list.

If you want additional information on a charity, or if an organization is not honoring your request to be put on their "do-not-call" list, contact our office's Consumer Division at (800) 727-6432 or visit us online at www.ago.ne.gov.